

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF FUNDING ON NEWSPAPER UTILISATION IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Newspapers are sources of information on topical and current issues, stocked by libraries for use. They are very important to users because they provide valuable information on vital national issues; contribute towards better education, social environment, and growth in agriculture, business and industrial sectors. University libraries, therefore, have the challenge of preserving newspapers for quick access and posterity. Existing studies have dealt with newspaper preservation but there is a dearth of studies on effects of funding on newspaper utilisation. This study, therefore, investigated effects of funding on newspaper utilisation in university libraries in Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select seven (7) federal and eight (8) state universities from all public universities in Nigeria in 2010. Fifteen (15) serials librarians and fifty (50) users from each of the selected universities participated in the study. The instruments used were two questionnaires, one for the serials librarian and the other for the users. The questionnaire on serials librarian had scales on funding ($r=0.65$), while that of the users had scales on newspaper utilisation ($r=0.71$). Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics. The result explicitly reveals that funding positively influence newspaper subscription and frequency of use in both federal and state university libraries in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Newspaper Funding, Newspaper Utilisation, University Libraries

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of university libraries is to create, preserve and transmit knowledge. The Florida University Library (2013) states that the mission of the university library is to support and enhance learning, teaching, research and service activities by providing organised access to quality information in all formats, promoting information literacy and preserving information. Therefore, libraries' collections, contained in a variety of media, newspapers inclusive, should be organised in such a manner that learners can retrieve what they need to support their academic work.

Since the major purpose of the library is to acquire, preserve and make materials available, there is need to acquire appropriate materials and collect necessary print and non-print materials to meet the information or recreational needs of its users. Anafulu (1996) in his contribution to the subject stated that if the library is to meet the objective for which it was established, money should be made available for the procurement and processing of materials. To achieve this purpose therefore, the library needs recognition by the authority of such institution (Opaleke, 2005). Such recognition would be by providing adequate fund through an annual budget allocation for the library to operate effectively.

Thus, budget serves as an instrument for pursuing efficiency, and translation of financial resources into human purposes. With an annual budget, university libraries would in turn be able to set aside or make money available for certain

purposes such as daily subscription to copies of different titles and multiple copies of newspapers. These would increase the frequency of newspaper utilisation in university libraries in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Newspapers are sources of information on current issues in any nation and in the world at large. They are loaded with information which appear in the form of news reporting and feature articles on contemporary issues. University libraries therefore subscribe to them on a daily basis. However, without adequate finance, university libraries cannot provide continuous subscription to newspapers and other information resources. But with an annual budget, university libraries would be able to set aside or make money available for certain purposes such as daily subscription to copies of different titles and multiple copies of newspapers, bibliographic control of newspapers through indexing and abstracting. These would increase the frequency of newspaper utilisation in university libraries in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Newspapers according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2010) are publications usually issued daily, weekly or at other regular times. They provide news, views, features and other information of public interest. According to Igbeka (2010), newspapers provide up-to-date information on local, state/provincial, national and world issues. They are among the most widely read periodicals that are available and accessible to the vast majority of people of all ages and walks of life in any community. She argues that every category of readers can find some important, current and interesting information in the newspapers because they may and usually do offer views and opinions on current events. Moreover, they can be read in the library at the users' convenience fitting easily into time schedules (Encyclopaedia Americana, 2006). McIntyre (1986) also reports that the most important reason why people read or subscribe to newspapers is that people enjoy the medium's portability coupled with the fact that the medium contains some information they cannot get from another source.

Besides, the need for adequate, timely and up-to-date information in taking both personal and corporate decisions has often been stressed. One of the means through which information is transmitted is the newspaper. The importance of newspapers as an information source was highlighted in Aiyepoku's (1982) study on information utilisation by policy makers. The study revealed that 84% of the policy makers consulted newspapers and magazines and this ranked among the five most consulted information used by policy makers in Nigeria. Onu (2005) also supports the view that daily newspapers are accorded a great deal of importance in university libraries in most countries.

According to her, in most cases, the source of many policy changes, priority changes and even interest changes has been the information read on the pages of newspapers. Moreover, there is a universal agreement that information is an important element in every sector of life and cannot be underestimated (Bello and Ajala, 2004). This view is supported by the social responsibility theory of the press which postulates five functions of the media. One of them is that the media should give citizens access to all relevant information through newspaper reports (Fadiran, 1988). In view of the interest of users in reading newspapers and its importance as a primary source of information, librarians should improve and sustain newspaper subscription in university libraries in Nigeria.

Thus, the need for funding in university libraries is increasingly important. According to Oduwole and Idowu (2011), lack of funds for effective running of university libraries in Nigeria have adversely affected adequate provision of quality modern books, updated literature materials, journals and subscription to adequate newspaper titles and copies for

library users. Moreover, there has been enormous increase in students' enrolment without corresponding increase in funding (Ojebode, 2009).

Therefore, university libraries have been put under pressure over the last decade to manage their resources effectively and efficiently. They must effectively divide funds between staff and materials, which include acquisition of books, journals and newspapers, services and equipment (Oyelude and Ola, 2008). However, for university libraries to effectively perform their functions, they have to be adequately funded. According to Odusanya (2004), underfunding of university libraries in Nigeria has however affected newspaper subscription and utilisation. The situation at present remains the same with university libraries in Nigeria. Inadequate funding for periodicals, newspapers inclusive seems to be a global issue (Lawal and Okwueze, 2007). According to them, the situation is the same in most African countries.

Kavulya (2006) in his survey of four university libraries in Kenya revealed inadequate funding of newspapers due to dwindling government fund allocation to parent institutions. Lending credence to this, Mahmood, Hammed and Haider (2006) stated that among various types of library collections, periodicals to which newspapers belong, have been the worst victims of financial crisis in Pakistan university libraries. Consequently, libraries have to cut their subscriptions and this has affected newspaper utilisation. As observed by Fowowe (2006), adequate funding should be considered a basic necessity for the effect of newspaper acquisition and utilisation in university libraries. In this respect, it must be recognised that funds are needed for newspaper subscription and services which are provided for library users. In addition, with adequate fund, university libraries would achieve greater efficiency and optimal results in delivering newspaper services that meet the identified needs of its users.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of funding on newspaper utilization in university libraries in Nigeria; and specifically to ascertain the following:

- find out if university libraries subscribe to newspapers and which titles;
- find out how much is expended by university libraries in Nigeria on the purchase of newspapers annually;
- determine the categories of users and frequency of newspaper utilisation in university libraries in Nigeria

METHODOLOGY

The design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey research design. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select serials librarians from the selected seven (7) federal and eight (8) state universities. As a result, fifteen (15) serials librarians were selected from the seven (7) federal and eight (8) state universities. The choice of serials librarians was preferred because they were the ones dealing directly with newspaper collections.

The statistics of users (researchers) of newspapers was obtained from the serials librarians of the university libraries selected for the study. Saturdays and Sundays are exempted from the study because some university libraries in Nigeria do not provide services on those days of the week, while some provide half day service. The sample of 750 users who made use of newspapers during the period of data collection in the seven (7) federal and eight (8) state university libraries were selected.

Data Collection Procedure

Copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher and two research assistants through the help of head of the serials unit in each university library. Fifty (50) users found reading newspapers in the serials unit in each of the seven (7) federal and eight (8) state university libraries were selected for the study giving a total of seven hundred and fifty (750) users. Users were requested to fill the questionnaire on the spot and return them to the researcher or the assistants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Fifteen (15) serials librarians and seven hundred and fifty (750) users from seven (7) federal and eight (8) state university libraries participated in this study. The year of establishment of the universities studied by the researcher covers the period of 1948 – 2005. University of Ibadan was the oldest while Nasarawa and Adamawa state universities were the youngest, both were established in 2002. The significance of this is that federal and state universities were fairly represented in the study.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

Serials Librarians		
Demographic Information	Frequency	%
Male	10	67
Female	5	33
Total	15	100
Users		
Demographic Information	Frequency	%
Male	445	59
Female	305	41
Total	750	100

Ten (10) serials librarians representing (67%) were males, while 5 (33%) were females. The users' questionnaire had 445 (59%) males, while 305 (41%) were females. All these indicated that both genders were fairly represented in the study except that in each case, majority of the respondents were male. The reason that can be given for more male users could be due to the fact that they usually visit the newspaper section in university libraries to read newspapers more frequently than female users.

Analysis of the serials librarians by years of working experience indicated that majority of them fall within 6-9 (40%) years, while 10 years and above working experience had (60%). This implies that majority of the serials librarians have experiences as librarians. Therefore, they know the importance of newspapers in university libraries and should be able to comment on the effects of funding on newspaper utilisation in university libraries in Nigeria.

Analysis of the academic qualification of the serials librarians revealed that 13 representing 86.7% had MLS/MLIS as their minimum qualification while 2 (13.3%) had a Ph.D. This shows that the respondents had adequate professional training as librarians.

Table 2: Subscription to Nigerian Newspapers

Number of Newspaper titles Subscribed to	Year 1948-2001		Year 2002-2010	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1-2	-	-	6	40
3-4	-	-	4	27
5-6	2	13	1	7
7-8	6	40	2	13
9-10	7	47	2	13
Total	15	100	15	100

The entire Fifteen (15) serials librarians answered in the affirmative that their libraries subscribe to newspapers; this gave a response rate of 100%. Table 2 shows the frequency of numbers of titles of newspapers subscribed to by each university library. Between 2002 and 2010, the highest frequency was between one and two titles of newspapers (40%). Between 1948 and 2001, 7 (47%) universities subscribed to nine to ten titles, while 6 (40%) universities subscribed to seven to eight titles of newspapers.

The titles subscribed to by each university varied depending on their geographical location and the ones consulted frequently by users in each university library studied. The common titles were: The Guardian, The Nation, The Punch, This Day, and The Sun. Titles such as The Vanguard, The Nigerian Tribune, The N, The Compass, The Daily Trust, The Nigerian Observer, The Daily Champion, Independent Newspaper, Leadership, The Mirror and Triumph, were subscribed to by university libraries within the geographical location where they are published.

The researcher observed that the numbers of each title of newspapers subscribed to at present by each university library has dropped significantly. The drop is because most university libraries have reduced the number of newspapers subscribed to. The reasons given are due to the increase in price, proliferation of different titles by newspaper publishers and dwindling financial resources.

Table 3: Expenditure on Newspapers

Amount (Naira)	Freq.	%
100,000-00	5	33
200,000-00	3	20
300,000-00	4	27
400,000-00	2	13
500,000-00	1	7
Total	15	100

The lowest amount is one hundred thousand with a frequency count of 5 (33%), while the highest is five hundred thousand with a frequency count of 1 (7%). The reasons given for the drop of newspaper subscription is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Drop in Newspaper Subscription

Drop in Newspaper Subscription	Freq.	%
Financial constraint	9	60
Insufficient budget allocation	6	40
Others	-	-
Total	15	100

Majority of the respondents, that is 60%, claim that the drop is due to financial constraint, 40% attributed it to insufficient budget allocated to the university library. From the response above, financial constraint means that the fund is

not adequate to accommodate more newspaper titles as well as more copies of each title, and insufficient budget allocation means that the budget is not large enough, therefore, the library cannot subscribe to more titles of newspapers on the stand.

To the question: 'Do you have a budget for the library?', all the serials librarians answered in the affirmative, but only two gave a figure of three hundred thousand naira (#300,000-00) only as budget for newspapers. The others did not give any figure. This implies that most university libraries do not have a constant budgetary allocation for newspaper subscription.

Users such as staff and students who visited the newspaper section at the time when the questionnaire were distributed responded to the question "what are the frequency of use and categories of users who utilise newspapers in University libraries in Nigeria". The respondents cut across various departments in the universities. 109 staff representing 15% and 641 students representing 85% responded to the question

Economics department had the largest respondents of 58 (7.7%), followed by Microbiology 54 (7.2%), Library and Information Science 52 (6.9%), Computer Science 50 (6.7%), History 57 (7.6%), Physics 39 (5.2%), Political Science 49 (6.5%), Teacher Education 37 (4.9%), Religious Studies 23 (3.1%), Geography 30 (4.0%), Law 34 (4.5%), Mathematics 26 (3.5%), Petroleum Engineering 25 (3.3%), Sociology and Anthropology 23 (3.1%), Electrical and Electronics 23 (3.1%), Accounting 20 (2.7%), Public Administration 20 (2.7%), Agricultural Engineering 20 (2.7%), Banking and Finance 15 (2.0%), Botany 13 (1.7%), Zoology 12 (1.6%), Medicine 12 (1.6%), Animal Science 12 (1.6%), Chemical Engineering 10 (1.3%), International Relations 10 (1.3%), Architecture 5 (0.7%), Anatomy 8 (1.1%) and Guidance and Counselling 13 (1.7%). This showed that newspapers are consulted by users from different diverse disciplines offered in the universities studied to meet their various needs.

In providing response to the research question on the frequency of newspaper utilisation in university libraries in Nigeria, the users' questionnaire was used to answer the question. Users of newspapers responded to this question by giving various reasons. Below is the descriptive analysis of frequency of newspaper utilisation in university libraries as prioritised by the respondents.

'I consult newspapers frequently, (mean=2.69, SD=1.05) ranked highest by the mean score and was followed in succession by 'I consult newspapers to meet my information needs' (mean=2.68, SD=0.87); 'I find back issues of newspapers in good condition' (mean=2.51, SD=1.04); 'Information obtained from newspapers are valuable to me' (mean=2.46, SD=0.82); 'I consult back issues of newspapers from the library' (mean=2.36, SD=1.11); 'digitisation aids quick access to newspapers' (mean=2.26, SD=0.93); 'reading newspapers on the Internet is very expensive, (mean= 2.17, SD=0.89); 'I have heard/read about newspaper digitisation' (mean=2.12, SD=0.93); 'I have access to back issues of newspapers on the Internet' (mean=2.10, SD=1.20); 'I read hard copies of newspapers only' (mean=2.05, SD=0.97); 'there are some constraints to reading hard copies of newspapers in the library' (mean=2.05, SD=1.10); 'I have heard/read about microfilm' (mean=1.95, SD=1.04); 'I read electronic version of newspapers only' (mean=1.67, SD=1.17); and 'I have read newspapers using the microfilm reader' (mean=1.53, SD=1.03) respectively.

The researcher observed that users are only allowed to read newspapers within the serials unit/newspaper section only. They are not allowed to borrow them out of the library but they can make photocopies of the pages they need from them only within the library premises. This is done in order to prevent users from mutilating the newspapers.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the findings showed that all university libraries in Nigeria subscribe to different titles of national newspapers because they know their worth in the library. They also subscribe to different titles because they have different amount of money allocated to newspaper subscription in their university libraries.

The result of this study further revealed that from the year of establishment of the oldest to the youngest university, they all have a rich collection of newspapers. It is only the titles and copies subscribed to that vary from one university library to the other. The titles subscribed to by each university library are determined by what is available in their geographical locations and the newspaper frequently consulted by users in each university library studied.

The findings showed that presently, 6 (40%) university libraries among those studied subscribe to between 1 and 2 titles of newspapers, while in the past 7 (47%) university libraries were subscribing to between 9 and 10 titles of newspapers and 6 (40%) university libraries were subscribing to between 7 and 8 titles of newspapers. This is in line with the findings of Ibrahim and Agaja (2002) that running from 1948 - 2001, university libraries were subscribing to almost all the issues of newspapers available locally because the economy of the nation was booming during the period.

In addition, the findings revealed that though university libraries still subscribe to newspapers, there has been a notable reduction in newspaper subscription in all the university libraries studied. 9 (60%) of the serials librarians attributed this to financial constraint while 6 (40%) claimed insufficient budget allocation and/or the fact that there was no special fund allocated to newspapers (34.5%). The result agrees with the assertion of Salam (2002) and Ajidahun (2006) that libraries have had to cut down on the number of newspapers they subscribe to because of their cover prices have increased.

The findings of this study also revealed that for university libraries to achieve their objectives and satisfy their various users there is need for them to be recognised by the authority of such establishment particularly with respect to funding because funding plays a prominent role in newspaper subscription, increase in the number of titles and copies and utilisation. Moreover, users support is very important in the use of newspapers in university libraries. If newspaper users feel the library's impact, they would make demands on the library's behalf. To this end, there must be appropriate funding for university libraries to plan for their expenses on newspaper subscription for a certain period of time.

The result of the findings shows that the level of funding of university libraries in Nigeria on newspapers is very low. Majority of the university libraries (31.0%) have an expenditure of 100,000.00 naira on newspapers, 27.6% have 300,000.00 naira, while 20.7% have an expenditure of 200,000.00 naira. 13.8% have 400,000.00 naira as expenditure and 6.9% have 500,000.00 naira as expenditure on newspapers. This indicates that the level of funding is low and also varies from one university library to the other. However, the results of the findings in this study revealed that funding of newspaper in federal universities was relatively better than state universities.

Thus, funding in university libraries should be looked into for sustenance and improvement of newspaper collection. This is necessary to ensure a steady supply at a period when the cover price increases at short notices. This is in accordance with the findings of Opaleke (2005) that if university libraries are to meet their objectives, they should be well funded to enable them function well and provide adequate newspaper services for their numerous users. It then becomes important that newspapers should be an important component of university libraries acquisition. In view of this, there should be an increase in newspaper budgets in university libraries in Nigeria. Moreover, it is necessary for university

librarians to cultivate the culture of budgeting for newspapers. This is in accordance with the findings of Oyelude and Ola (2008) that university libraries are complex entities with enormous resources that require planning and budgeting. Librarians should be given a free hand to operate by making the library autonomous so that they can perform effectively and efficiently in rendering services to their users.

The result of the findings revealed that different categories of users such as academic, non-academic staff and students utilise newspapers in university libraries for different reasons. Some claim that they use newspapers for their assignments, research work, to be up-to-date in politics, science, for leisure, entertainment, art and sports. The finding is in accordance with the research finding of Latood (1967). He justified the research value of newspaper by examining the statistics of reader's use of newspapers in the Library of Congress. He noted that no form of publication has been known to capture the day-to-day life of a community and its citizens better than the local newspapers.

Out of the fourteen (14) items on the users' questionnaire, the frequency of newspaper utilisation ranked highest with a mean score of 2.69 and the reason why users consult newspaper which is to meet their information needs followed closely with a mean score of 2.68. From the users' response, 'reading newspapers on the Internet is expensive'. This was placed on the seventh position with a mean score of 2.17. 'I read the electronic version of newspapers only' ranked second to the last with a mean score of 1.67 while 'I have read newspapers' using the microfilm reader' was scored last with a mean score of 1.53.

Findings of this study reveal that many respondents frequent the university library to consult newspapers to meet their various needs because they are sources of relevant and timely information. This finding is in line with the British Newspaper Library (1987) which submitted that for decades even hundreds of years after publication, researchers of all kinds, all over the world turn to newspapers for information relating to a wide variety of research needs. This is also in agreement with the findings of Okojie (1993), Bello and Ajala (2004), Wei Zhang (2006) and Cheney, Knapp, Alan and Czapla (2006) which state that despite the growing presence of news on the Internet, radio and television, the current newspaper collections of libraries continue to play a vital role in the academic community.

CONCLUSIONS

Libraries are established in the university system to provide high quality information service delivery in different areas and disciplines in order to support teaching, learning and research for academic staff members as well as acquisition of knowledge by the students. Thus, the librarian has to stock the library with not only textbooks but also other materials such as newspapers, journals, audio visual materials and Internet services. Therefore, subscription to adequate titles and copies of newspapers in university libraries in Nigeria is not negotiable and it is desirable to users in order to be up-to-date. Moreover, it is important to mention that despite the availability of a rich digital environment, people are still buying and reading/consulting newspapers in university libraries, especially in Nigeria where power supply is erratic.

Another conclusion that could be inferred is that in order for university libraries to be able to meet the demands of their users on newspaper utilization, there should be a significant level of funding earmarked for newspaper subscription in all university libraries in Nigeria.

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